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SUBJECT: New Zealand H1N1 Sitrep, June 25, 2009

REF: WELLINGTON 169

1. (U) Updating Post's last sitrep, (see reftel), New Zealand's H1N1 flu strategy has shifted from a program of containment for confirmed and suspected cases to management of the pandemic's impact throughout major population centers. The management strategy of the pandemic now abandons distribution of Tamiflu to all suspected and confirmed cases and will instead focus on those who are at most severe risk. NZ Ministry of Health (MoH) is now encouraging precautionary self-treatment of the H1N1 flu, as the majority of people will not need to see a physician to recover. MoH is responding to those still seeking treatment by boosting available resources at regional public health authorities to handle more patients. However, not all possible cases of H1N1 are swabbed and tested as not everyone is seeing a physician about symptoms. The management strategy also includes a concerted campaign to encourage citizens to also immunize against seasonal flu, which will peak within the next few weeks. MoH estimates that 10% of the population (about 400,000 people) is affected by seasonal flu every year, with about 400 people dying every year. This is in contrast to a report from the health coordination center estimated that no more than 200 New Zealanders would die from the illness this year. GNZ is also requesting that flu vaccine supplier CSL produce a safe vaccine to ensure that a return of the virus later in the year, or next year can be mitigated.

2. (U) Members of the New Zealand House of Representatives praised the Ministry of Health's handling of the H1N1 Influenza A Pandemic in response to a presentation made by Health Minister Tony Ryall on the status of the pandemic in NZ. Members of both the ruling coalition and the Opposition complimented Minister Ryall for his handling of the H1N1 pandemic. The MoH's containment strategy is believed to have had a great impact on slowing the spread of the non-seasonal flu strain through the islands, and has made management of the outbreak where community transmission has taken root, far easier.

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